



## ***Embassy of the United States of America***

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **U.S. Department of State Releases 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report** *Sierra Leone Upgraded from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2*

(FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE) – On June 19 the United States Department of State released the thirteenth annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. The 2013 report includes detailed narrative sections covering the status of human trafficking in 188 countries and territories. Sierra Leone was upgraded in this year's report – moving from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2 – based on improved government efforts to combat human trafficking.

Secretary of State John Kerry formally launched the 2013 TIP Report during a public ceremony at State Department headquarters in Washington, D.C. Secretary Kerry explained the importance of efforts to combat human trafficking and said the U.S. Government makes the fight against modern-day slavery a priority. He said, "We all have an interest in stopping this crime. That's why President Obama is so focused on this issue."

The theme of this year's TIP Report is "Victim Identification: The First Step in Stopping Modern Slavery."

Sierra Leone is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Victims originate largely from rural provinces and are recruited to urban and mining centers for the purposes of exploitation in prostitution, domestic servitude, and forced labor in artisanal diamond and granite mining, petty trading, portering, rock-breaking, street crime, and begging.

Sierra Leone's most recent Tier 2 classification means the country is making significant efforts to comply with international standards, but has not met them. The report noted increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts by the government, including passing the Sexual Offenses Act, an increase in investigations and prosecutions, and the initiation of a national awareness campaign.

More work is required, however, to help Sierra Leone better protect victims, bring traffickers to justice, and prevent trafficking. The 2013 TIP Report notes that "the government did not allocate adequate financial or human resources to victims services and continued to rely heavily

on NGOs and international organizations to assist trafficking victims, without providing such organizations with financial or in-kind support.”

The report further recommends that Sierra Leone accede to the 2000 United Nations TIP Protocol, also known as the “Palermo Protocol.”

The Secretary of State is required by U.S. law to annually submit a report to Congress on countries determined to be places of origin, transit, or destination for victims of human trafficking. The TIP Report describes the prevalence of human trafficking and level of anti-trafficking efforts in these countries, further classifying each in one of three “tiers.”

At the launch on June 19, Secretary Kerry added: “When we bring victims out of exploitation, we are helping to create more stable and productive communities.”

The full 2013 TIP Report is available from the Department of State’s website at <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/>.

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